Jule MEC

Europe

209

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

UNCLASSIFIED SECURITY INFORMATION

COPY NO. 1 OF 3 COPIES

Commenced orally along lines of latter S/P discussion.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1952 Apr 28 PM 4 05

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

April 28, 1952

P.S. See note below and copy of attached memo of 5/5/52

MEMORANDUM FOR AMBASSADOR WADSWORTH (S/P)

Would you mind taking a look at the attached memorandum before I do anything further with it? It is an oversimplification, but I do have the feeling that there is a point to be made if we are to see our way clearly through the MEC problem. I should be very grateful for your comments, and would be glad to come up and talk with you about it when you have read it if you would like me to.

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 6/28/78
PER Velotes OFFICE NEA
720115

Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY WDLF JR DATE 6/1/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKING☐
DECLASSIFIED☒ RELEASABLE☒
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Attachment:
Cy 2 of Memo to Mr. Matthews dtd 4/28 "MEC"

S/A PCJ:eva

Note: Spoke briefly with PCJ at Joe Dunner garden party May 3 and we agreed to postpone discussion pending upshot of current [illegible] re. demarche; see NEA memo April 29 and later exchanges of tels. with UK capitals.

5/14.

UNCLASSIFIED SECURITY INFORMATION

TOP SECRET
UNCLASSIFIED
COPY NO. ____
OF ____ COPIES

April 28, 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. MATTHEWS

Subject: Middle East Command

Our recent discussion of the Middle East Command seems to me to suggest the danger of failing to keep separate in our minds several different aspects of the Middle Eastern problem.

The first aspect of the problem is the strategic importance of the area in case of general war. In considering this eventuality we have to take intoaccount the purely military problem of defense which includes ascertaining what forces would be available, when they would be available, et cetera. We have generally proceeded on the assumption that the necessary forces would have to be brought in from outside except in so far as Turkish and Pakistani forces might be utilized. Aside from those forces the numbers and quality of the forces which would be available in the area would be insufficient. Nevertheless, local contributions to a total allied force are not wholly negligable. There is in addition a question of the utilizing of bases in the area. Both the use of bases and the use of locally contributed forces depend to a considerable degree upon the political attitude of the Governments of the Middle Eastern states. Even assuming that in case of the outbreak of war these Governments would be disposed to cooperate with us and our other allies, effective planning before the outbreak of war requires a degree of cooperation which must be induced by something other than the immediate menace of a Red Army on the march. This leads to the second aspect of the problem.

The second aspect is the development of a genuinely cooperative attitude on the part of the Governments in the area. In addition to the military considerations already stated this cooperation is important to us in terms of the utilization of the oil resources of the area, in terms of the uninterrupted use of the Suez Canal, and in terms of our general interest in the stability and friendliness of this part of the world.

Particular

UNCLASSIFIED
TOP SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

Particular steps which we might take now might contribute along the lines of the second aspect of the problem even though they did not contribute directly to the first aspect. We need to be sure that they would not interfere with steps which it might subsequently be necessary to take in connection with the first aspect.

In terms of the second aspect of the problem it seems to be a general assumption that, given the inherent weaknesses of the area, some strong outside influence needs to be exerted in a continuing overall manner. We usually start with the proposition that the British have exercised this influence. We move on to the proposition that we are not prepared to take over the responsibility of endeavoring to exercise that role in place of the UK. The conclusion that we are not in a position to take over seems to rest on two considerations:

1. It is a fact that we are not in a position to supply military forces for the defense of the area. I am not sure that it follows that the US could not if it wished exercise the necessary influence even without the present or the future ability to earmark forces for the area. The necessary influence would seem to depend upon the conviction of the Middle Eastern Governments that the United States represents power. Are we sure that in their consideration of the matter this depends upon the local deployment of forces rather than upon the general strength of the US? I should think the situation in this area was in this respect quite different from that in Western Europe. In Western Europe the proximity of the Red Army requires presence on the spot of substantial forces in order that a sense of security and of confidence can be created. The same sense of the immediate threat of the Red Army does not seem to be a present factor in the thinking of the Middle Eastern Governments. If this line of reasoning is sound we are in a position to exercise the necessary influence from outside without commitment of actual military forces.

2. The second conclusion affecting our readiness to take over UK responsibilities rests upon our relations not with the states of the area but with the UK itself. We take the position that it is in our national interests to sustain the position of the UK in the Middle East and not to take action which would seriously diminish their prestige. If this is the reason why we must leave the dominant role to the British this fact should be clearly understood so that our actions can be guided accordingly.

If for

UNCLASSIFIED SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED
SECURITY INFORMATION

If, for example, these general ideas are applied to the present difficulties between the UK and Egypt we find ourselves under the necessity of following a policy which will contribute to lining up Egypt on our side without seriously injuring British prestige. It is not always clear ~~that particular issues such as~~ whether the stationing of British forces near the Canal is necessary from the military point of view in terms of preparing for the defense of the area in case of war or whether it is necessary for maintaining British prestige. It seems to me it is important that we should clearly understand at least where the emphasis lies as between these two factors even though the situation may involve a mixture of both.

The problem is complicated by our relations with France and the French desire to retain or recapture prestige in the area. A further complication is the position of Turkey which represents real power in the area but which inherits some of the fears and animosities growing out of the historical Turkish position of dominance in the area.

Applying these various considerations to the proposal for establishing the MEC, it seems to me that the arguments for the MEC are weak in so far as they relate to the purely military problem of preparing to defend the area in time of war. On a long-range basis they might usefully serve that end but if this were the only or the principal point in our minds, we might come up with some alternative solution.

The stronger arguments for the MEC are based on the judgment that this would be a useful instrumentality for handling the mixed problem of our relations with the UK, France and Turkey on the one hand and with the states of the Middle Eastern area on the other hand. I think we are led to the conclusion that we should not attempt to deal on a purely unilateral basis with the Middle Eastern states. We do need to act in conjunction with the United Kingdom. Our relations with France and Turkey make it undesirable to freeze them out of the joint venture. Our joint association with these three countries against whom there are varying degrees of hostility among the Middle Eastern Governments has the danger that this hostility will spread to us. By going ahead with the MEC we would gamble on the proposition that our participation would sweeten the mixture and make it palatable to the Middle Eastern Governments. In support of this view there is the fact that they would be more concerned if the UK and France were operating wholly on their own in the area than if they were operating in close cooperation with the United States.

We

UNCLASSIFIED
SECURITY INFORMATION

UNCLASSIFIED SECURITY INFORMATION

We can not be sure that the MEC will be successful in serving as a focal point for building a cooperative arrangement between the four principal sponsoring powers and the Middle Eastern states. In various discussions however I think the predominant view has been that our participation in this venture would not be harmful and might be helpful.

Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

S/A:PCJ:sv

UNCLASSIFIED SECURITY INFORMATION